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ABSTRACT

The Commission of the European Community has set up an action program to support the development and implementation of policies in Member States aimed at ensuring that all young people may receive at least 1 year of vocational education after completion of their full-time compulsory education. The action program has three separate but connected parts: (1) a European Network of training initiatives to produce transnational cooperative partnerships; (2) Youth Initiative Projects; and (3) cooperative action in the area of research and surveys on the effectiveness of training provision. The European Network of training initiatives and associated technical assistance are intended to link selected training initiatives/projects to give a European dimension to training measures in Member States at national, regional, and local levels. The aim of the Youth Initiative Projects is to support projects where young people play a major part in the planning, organization, and management of training activities. Using the European dimension, the research component is intended to stimulate and help Member States to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their policies to implement the decision. (Names and addresses of national policy coordinators are appended.) (YLB)

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THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING
OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PREPARATION FOR ADULT AND WORKING LIFE

Aims

The European Action Programme for the Vocational Training of Young People and their Preparation for Adult and Working Life was set up by a Decision of the Council of the European Community, on 1 December 1987. Its objective is to support the development and implementation of policies in Member States aimed at ensuring that all young people who so wish receive one year's, or, if possible, two or more years', vocational training after the completion of their full-time compulsory education.

The Programme will support and supplement the efforts of Member States aimed at:

- raising the standards and quality of vocational training, and improving the preparation of young people for adult life, work and continuing training;
- diversifying the range of vocational training available for young people with different kinds of ability, and ensuring that it leads to recognised qualifications;
- enhancing the capacity of vocational training systems to adapt to economic, technological and social change.

The Programme is to be implemented at a time of increasing concern in the Community to achieve economic and social cohesion. Support for the Community's disadvantaged regions, the social integration of young people into the labour market, and the continuing fight against unemployment are among the five key objectives for the Community, established by the Heads of State and Government at the recent European

Council in Brussels in February 1988. In pursuit of these objectives and in the perspective of "1992", the Commission is striving to establish closer co-operation with the Member States in the field of vocational training.

Implementation

The Action Programme has three separate but connected parts:

- a European Network of training initiatives to be twinned or linked to produce transnational, co-operative partnerships;
- Youth Initiative Projects;
- co-operative action in the area of research and surveys on the effectiveness of training provision.

The Programme provides also for an extension of the scheme for exchanges of vocational training specialists, administered for the Commission by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP).

The Commission will provide technical assistance funds to the less-developed regions of the Community, especially in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, to ensure their full participation in the Programme, particularly the Network of Training Initiatives.

The Programme will be financed from the Commission's funds for vocational training in 1988-89 (estimated budget total for 1988: 8 million ECU). For 1990 and beyond, the Programme may be financed, at least in part, from the European Social Fund, and the Commission will draw, wherever possible, on its experience of training operations for young people financed in that framework.

The Commission has established a group of National Policy Co-ordinators nominated by national authorities to provide advice on the Programme through twice-yearly meetings in Brussels (see below). In most

cases Member States have nominated to it representatives of both Labour and Education Ministries in view of the shared responsibilities between government departments in this field and the need for close co-operation between them.

The Programme's success will depend not only on co-operation between the Commission and Member State authorities, but also on the close association with it of the social partners. Regular dialogue with them at European level will be maintained by the Commission through UNICE and ETUC, and by national authorities at Member State level.

The Commission will arrange with Member States, throughout the five-year period of the Programme, a series of high-level conferences to monitor the implementation of the Decision and the associated Action Programme. An Interim Report will be submitted to the Council and the European Parliament by 1 January 1990, and also to the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training and the Education Committee of the Council.

To complement the Programme, the Commission is also carrying out preparatory work on a parallel Action Programme, in the field of compulsory education, covering the period 1989 to 1992, as called for by the Council in May 1988.

The European Network of Training Initiatives

The aim of the European Network of training initiatives, and associated technical assistance, is to link selected training initiatives/projects so as to give a European dimension to training measures in the Member States at national, regional and local levels by facilitating transnational, co-operative, partnerships as part of the development of vocational training for young people.

About 100 projects are to take part in 1988-89, normally for a maximum of two years. Further projects will be considered for admission in 1990 and later. The Network will thus serve as a flexible framework for linking innovative projects which respond to changing national

policy needs over the five-year period and can be seen as European examples of new approaches or good practice, and therefore likely to influence the development of the mainstream system in each Member State.

The Network will emphasise particularly the importance of partnership at two levels:

- at national, regional and local level, partnership to mobilise the collective resources of the public, private and voluntary sectors so as to develop a co-operative or integrated approach to vocational education, training and counselling for young people and to promote a climate for effective partnership between the agencies concerned;
- at the European level, partnership designed to increase mutual understanding of the common economic and commercial interests of the local areas or regions involved and their cultural and commercial ties, and active co-operation based on it. This co-operation, which may take many forms, will provide a strong European dimension to the Network.

To facilitate interaction and the development of transnational co-operation, the Network projects will focus on the priority areas defined in the Decision. They include actions to improve the quality and variety of training; the promotion of co-ordination between training providers; the promotion of easier progression into, and within, training systems; actions to help young people who are disadvantaged or living in disadvantaged areas; the development and co-ordination of diversified forms of guidance; actions in rural areas; and actions to reinforce girls' access to vocational training in industrial, technical and scientific fields.

The Commission will assist the European-level interaction process and twinning of projects, bilaterally or multi-laterally, in various ways: by circulating a "catalogue" of project profiles to all projects participating in the Network; by arranging theme-based or geographically-based workshops; by providing study-visits (or "contact") and partnership grants to projects; and by drawing on the CEDEFOP study-visit programme for the exchange of vocational training specialists.

Further data are given in a separate Information Note on the European Network, available from the Commission.

Youth Initiative Projects

This part of the Programme is to support projects where young people themselves play a major part in the planning, organisation and management of activities which contribute in various ways to their training, instead of being only, or mainly, the recipients.

It offers support, in the form of a small grant valid for one year, to projects which contribute to young people's training and transition to adult life by:

- involving them in the production of more effective and co-ordinated information for young people;
- encouraging activities which promote initiative, responsibility and creativity amongst young people.

About 120 grants will be available each year.

These projects are complementary to the usual institutional arrangements for training and counselling. Experience from them will be analysed and made available to those responsible for the regular services, to sharpen their awareness of the needs and aspirations of young people, and to provide suggestions and models of how their services can be made more accessible to young people.

The selection of projects for support will reflect the basic priorities of the whole Programme. Encouragement will be given to the integration of the Youth Initiative approach into the projects and other activities of the European Network of training initiatives.

European-wide exchange of experience will be encouraged and supported by the Commission. The European dimension will also be exploited to promote young people's awareness of the Community in the context of "1992", and the growth of opportunities for exchange and co-operation between young people in the Community. This will complement the efforts of the Commission in providing opportunities through the Young Worker Exchange Scheme for the exchange of over 4,500 young people in 1988, and the adoption by the Council on 24 May 1988 of the "Youth for Europe" proposals.

Further information on Youth Initiative Projects is contained in a grant application form.

Co-operative research

The research component of the Programme will use the European dimension to stimulate and help Member States to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their policies to implement the Decision. The Commission will organise a process of co-operation to pool expertise and thus use resources more effectively, and to identify themes of common concern on which co-operative research can focus in groups of countries.

Possible themes of this kind would include: the need to collect adequate statistics on the provision of, and participation in, vocational training programmes; the effectiveness of links and bridges between general education and vocational training; the effectiveness of systems of continuing guidance and counselling; and the need to develop ways of assessing work-based learning and work experience provided as part of the school curriculum.

Special attention will also be given to the need to monitor the quality and effectiveness of provision at regional or local level and for disadvantaged groups and areas in particular. The Commission's review of national youth training measures (1985) showed clearly the need to

conduct surveys of young people's perceptions and experience of education and training provision, and their movement between, and through, the two systems.

A process of regular review will also be set up, to assess the evolution of qualifications in Member States, as part of Community efforts to ensure comparability of qualifications and free movement of workers. Such a review, carried out in close co-operation with national authorities, will permit the pooling of experience of innovations, such as modular systems of training and certification, which could contribute to European objectives.

Further information

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30.11.88

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